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ABSTRACT

This paper presents brief summaries of two exploratory studies conducted to determine the non-custodial father's perception of his role and responsibilities following divorce. In Study I, eight middle class males who visited their children at least twice a month were interviewed individually. The interview consisted of a structured questionnaire sub-divided into four categories representing the roles of provider, protector, model, and caregiver. Results indicate that the non-custodial father accepts his legal responsibilities, wants to be more involved with his children's affairs, and accepts his role and responsibilities to serve as a model and a protector for his children. In Study II, a self-administered survey was given to 13 non-custodial fathers. The survey focused on types of activities (routine, recreational, educational, religious, and social) the noncustodial fathers engaged in with their children, and the frequency of involvement (occasionally, monthly, twice monthly, three times monthly, and four times monthly) in the activities. Overall results indicate that the non-custodial father has limited involvement with his children--that the majority of activities engaged in with children are recreational and that these take place on an occasional or monthly basis. (CM)

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What do we do today, Daddy?
(Father's perception of his role and responsibilities)

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Two exploratory studies were conducted to discover the noncustodial father's perception of his role and responsibilities.

Study I Summary

An exploratory study was conducted to study the noncustodial father's perception of his role and responsibilities. To accomplish the intent of the study a structured interveiw questionnaire was developed.

The subjects of this study were eight middle class males who visited with their children at least twice a month. All subjects were members of Parents Without Partners.

The structured interview questionnaire was subdivided into four categories; provider, protector, model, and caregiver. Each subject was interviewed individually. Each gave his permission for the interview to be taped.

Results: Provider

1. All noncustodial fathers stated that they would need to know the details before committing themselves to additional payments for emergencies or other expenses.
2. Marital status of his ex-wife or himself should not change the amount of child support, the noncustodial stated.
3. All noncustodial fathers stated their responsibilities for providing for their children never ceased.

Protector

1. The noncustodial father felt because this time was limited with his child, the task fo being a protector

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was difficult.

2. The noncustodial father realized he had no legal right or obligation to make final decisions about the welfare of his children, but he wanted to be consulted.
3. The noncustodial father felt that morally he had the right to be consulted about his child's problems. Particularly because he was expected to pay some of the bills.
4. The noncustodial father would like the major responsibility for making final decisions related to his child's health and education.

Model

1. The noncustodial father believed he should be a model of adult behavior for his child.
2. The noncustodial father believed he should teach his son male activities, should teach his child that males are caring, supportive persons who are dependable, upright, strong, and loving.
3. The noncustodial father shared household tasks with his wife before the divorce.
4. The noncustodial father felt one of his major responsibilities was to teach his child right from wrong.

Caregiver

1. All noncustodial fathers reported being involved in child care actitivities before and after their divorce.
2. The noncustodial father thought the major responsibility for discipling his child was the mohter's.
3. The noncustodial father felt that sex education for his child was the responsibility of both parents. He believed it was important for the child's questions to be answered when asked regarless of which parent was present.
4. The noncustodial father wanted more involvement in his child's education.

Conclusions

From this limited exploratory study one may conclude:

1. The noncustodial father wants and believes he should have more involvement with his children's affairs.
2. The noncustodial father recognizes and accepts his legal responsibilities to his children.
3. The noncustodial father places his responsibility for protecting his child highest on his priority list.
4. The noncustodial father accepts his role and responsibility to serve as a model for his children.
5. The noncustodial father, if given the opportunity, would become more involved with his child, especially in the areas of health and education.
6. The noncustodial father is searching for ways to be a "good" father to his children.

Study II Summary

A self-administered survey was given to thirteen noncustodial fathers who were members of Parents Without Partners. The purpose of the survey was to determine the types of activities the noncustodial father engaged in with their children and the frequency of involvement in the activities.

The survey contained five categories of activities: routine, recreational, educational, religious, and social. There were 26 activities listed for the fathers to indicate the involvement, if any, he had with their children. The varying degrees of involvement were: occasionally, monthly, twice monthly, three times per month or our times per month.

Results

1. The noncustodial father participated in 51% of the activities listed.
2. Of those activities in which he participated, 49% were identified as recreational, 24% were routine, 13% education, 8% religious, and 6% social
3. A total of 73% of participation by the noncustodial father was in routine and recreational activities.

4. The noncustodial father participared in 51% of the routine activities occasionally or monthly.
5. Shopping and eating out represented 38% of the activities in which the noncustodial father participated in the routine category.
6. Two activities (car Pool and doctor's appointment) represented 57% of the activities the noncustodial father did on an occasionally or a monthly basis.
7. The noncustodial father engaged in 59% of the recreational activities occasionally or monthly.
8. The noncustodial father engaged in 20% of the recreational activities four times per month.
9. The noncustodial father engaged in two-thirds of the recreational activities listed (66% active and 67% passive) almost equally.
10. In the active recreational activities category phyical activities (swimming, fishing, hunting, etc.) had the highest participation (77%) with table games being the lowest (54%).
11. In the passive recreational activities category, television had the highest participation (92%).
12. Of all the recreational activities listed, attending sporting events was the lowest (38%).
13. Of the educational activities listed visiting museums whas highest (54%) with helping with homework. (46%) and visiting with teacher (46%) rated second.
14. The noncustodial father tended to participate in educational activities occasionally or once a month (86%).
15. The religious activities engaged in by the noncustodial father was 8% of the total activities listed.
16. The noncustodial father indicated that of the religious activities listed attending Sunday School with his child was the highest (50%).
17. The noncustodial father participated in 50% of the religious activities four times per month.

18. Only 6% of the total activities participated in by the noncustodial father was social activities.

Conclusions:

1. The noncustodial father plans the majority of his time with his child to take care of routine matters and to participate in recreational activities.
2. The noncustodial father devotes a large portion of his time providing and protecting his children.
3. The noncustodial father tends to be involved with children in physical activities (sports).
4. Television is the major recreational activity the noncustodial father shares with his children.
5. The noncustodial father thends to combine educational and recreational activities.
6. The noncustodial father engages in the majority of of activities with his children on an occasional or a monthly basis.
7. The noncustodial father, although his religious activities with his children are limited, tends to engage in those activities on a regular monthly basis.
10. The noncustodial father has very limited involvement with his children.